

originally on www.torino2006.org, 5 Jan 2006

FEDERICA FAIELLA & MASSIMO SCALI: ON THE EVE OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES

She is 24 and he is 26, Federica Faiella and Massimo Scali were both born in Rome but they have been skating in Milan for almost five years.

After some good results at junior level with other partners (Federica came 2nd at the junior World Championships with Luciano Milo, Massimo 4th with Flavia Ottaviani), they have been a close and rising couple since 2001.

The competitive debut of the pair dates back to 2002, when they finished 12th at the European Championships, 18th at the Olympic Games and 16th at the World Championships.

The best results so far were achieved in 2005: 5th place at the European Championships and 9th at the World Championships, prestigious placings that gave Italy the right to two places in this discipline in all the major competitions of the current season.

They started skating in Rome under the guidance of the Bianchi/Rizzo partners, who followed them when they moved to Milan. However, since last year they have been relying on the experienced team of Paola Mezzadri and Roberto Pelizzola and the results, both at the technical and artistic level, are soon starting to show. Radiant, intense, passionate, they have conquered hordes of admirers since their debut.

And now we meet them again, on the eve of the National Championship, and together with them, we travel back through a journey going from the first competitions of this season to the most important ones they still have to face.

How was your start of the season? How do you feel about the National Championships?

“We had a good start of the season with the first National Championship in Torino, then, of course, we had a problem with a skate at the Cup of China which doomed our performance, and in France, at the Bompard Trophy we had just recovered from an injury, however we still made it to the podium although we weren’t exactly in the best conditions. All in all, it didn’t go badly. We are very confident about the rest of the season”.

Have you touched up your programmes in order to get ready for the upcoming competitions?

“When we saw, from the Grand Prix results, that our levels in the original dance elements were being given low marks, we worked very hard on them: apart from the danced pieces, we practically did it all over again. As for the free skate, we especially focused on the elements that were giving us some troubles, we improved the edges, the lifts, while still maintaining the chosen elements. We can say we have refined it”.

You’re about to experience a very intense period: after the National Championships, there will be the European Championships in Lyon and, finally, the Olympic Games. How are you preparing, also psychologically, for the event? Have you learnt anything from the experience at Salt Lake City which you think will be useful in Torino?

“At Salt Lake City we were thrown right in at the deep end, we almost didn’t know what was happening around us. Since then, the most important thing we have learnt is to keep a better hold on our emotions, and this will be extremely important. We were happy to compete at the European Championships of Torino 2005 on the same ice rink, and that was a big test for us as well. However, it is difficult to compare the Olympic Games with any other competition, they are so “strange”... we can only take them as they come, doing the best we can.”

In a fiercely competitive arena, such as the Palavela of Torino will be, where many ice dancing pairs will not only compete for the title, but also for all three available medals, Massimo and Federica will have the chance to express themselves to their best and the fact of not having any pressure is an advantage for them: “Our aim is to do our very best and touch the audience, as for the rest we are very relaxed”.

Paola Occhipinti
Melania Resnigo